**Transportation through Bangladesh**

5023. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether Government have held talks recently with the Government of Bangladesh on the issue of transportation from North Eastern States to Kolkata through Bangladesh; and

(b) If so, the extent of progress in the discussion ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA) : (a) Yes.

(b) The operationalisation of the Agartala-Dhaka bus service was discussed with Mr. Morshed Khan, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh during his visit to India in February, 2003. The Foreign Minister informed that a stretch of 16 kms. of the road on which the bus service is to be operated is not in good condition and that the Government of Bangladesh is undertaking the necessary repairs. The matter was also discussed during the Foreign Secretary level Talks held with Bangladesh on 29th April 2003. The Bangladesh delegation informed that necessary action is being taken for operationalising the bus service.

**Expulsion of Iraqi diplomats**

5024. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE :

SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR :

SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT :

SHRIMATI CHANDRA KALA PANDEY :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether India had turned down the U.S. request for expulsion of three Iraqi diplomats from New Delhi;

(b) If so, the details thereof;

(c) whether so far, only Australia had responded to the U.S. request by expelling an Iraqi diplomat; and

(d) whether the U.S. request to India was promoted by the alleged involvement of NEC Engg. Company of India in assisting Baghdad for development of a chemical facility ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) : (a) and (b) The U.S. Government had made a request for explusion of Iraqi diplomats from India on the ground of perceived threat by